Russo-Japanese War

Name

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The Russo-Japanese War occurred between the years 1904 to the year 1905. The main participants of the war were the Japanese and the Russians. These two empires engaged in war after a disagreement on who between them was to have control over Korea and Manchuria. The Japanese Empire emerged to be victoriously and forced the Russians out of the Korea and Manchuria. However, the victory was not a complete war victory but rather was as a result of negotiated peace between the two countries. The Russo-Japanese War had great historical significance as it was the first war which saw a European country been defeated by an Asian power. The war played a crucial role in the rising status of Japan in the world.

The disagreements between Japan and Russia empires started way back in the nineteenth century. After Japan had won the Sino-Japanese War that occurred from 1894 to 1895 against China, it took over Korea which was regarded as a tributary state of Japan and Peninsula in Manchuria. Additionally, Japan acquired important trading rights in China. However, Germany, France, and Russia forced Japan to give up its control rights over Peninsula. A year later, Russia joined China and formed an alliance which was against Japan. The collaboration resulted to China leasing out Liaodong Peninsula to the Russians for twenty-five years. The deal included the Russian permission to take control of Port Arthur which was a single warm-water port on the entire Pacific coast and had a great strategic significance. Additionally, Russians through their deal with the Chinas acquired the right to expand their Trans-Siberian Railroad to the Chinese Manchuria. The Russians expansions of territories in Peninsula posed a significant threat to Japan Power. As a result, the two countries began conflicts over the control of Korea and Manchuria which were regarded to be of significant value both strategically and economically.
The Russians continued to strengthen their control over Manchuria over time. This was no good news to the Japanese who resorted to forming negotiations with the Russians over the control of Korea and Manchuria. Japanese statesman Ito Hirobumi initiated negotiations with a proposal of giving Manchuria to Russia in exchange for the control of Korea. Afterward, each country drafted their suggestions and negotiations started. However, as the negotiations continued, the Japanese government realized that their counterparts were not interested in settling the conflicts issues over the Korea and Manchuria but instead they were only buying time through the negotiation process to build up their military. Nevertheless, the Japanese in quench for peace proposed a structure in which the Manchuria would be out of their control and Korea out of Russia influence. However, the Japanese received no formal reply from their counterparts.

The war began on February 8th, 1904, when the Japanese launched a surprise attack on the Russian naval at Port Arthur. This attack came several hours before the Japanese declaration of war had reached the Russian governments. The Russian government later declared war against Japan. An agreement that was signed earlier between Japan and British provide that in a case of war between Japan and Russia, if any nation had to support Russia during the war, then Britain would back Japan. With this provision, the Russo-Japanese War was solely fought between Japan and Russia.

The war involved different major battles which all ended in favor of the Japanese. First, the primary objective of the Japan Army was to weaken the Russian Army at Port Arthur. This was because the Russian central military base was located at Port Arthur thus the Japanese knew if the neutralized the main base it meant they had more chances of winning the war. The first battle took place on Port Arthur which was a surprise attack by the Japanese Army. However,
this fight was inconclusive, but it made the war between the two countries to be made formal.

The fight at the Port Arthur continued as the Japanese troops tried to win over the Russian forces who were reluctant to come out of the Port. The Japanese main aim was to deny the Russians use of the Harbor thus blocking any entry of new Russian ships.

After a ferocious battle and suffering costly assaults failures the Japanese eventually obtained victory over the siege of Port Arthur. The Russians severely suffered as four of their battleships were sunk in the Pacific. Commander of the Russian troops perceived that the purse of defending the city was lost after his fleet was destroyed. This resulted to the garrison’s leadership having divisions and Port Arthur Commander on January 1905 surrendered to the Japanese without consulting his seniors in the Russian military. This was a major setback as the port he surrendered had stores of ammunition which were later used by the Japanese troops. The Japanese army then proceeded to Korea where they fought the Russians in Mukden. Japanese forces successfully used encircling maneuvers to attack the inexperienced Russian troops who occupied the Mukden area. However, although the Russians had retreated the Japanese were not able to completely wreck them as they had suffered a high number of casualties.

Tsar Nicholas II had sent out Russian Army from Russia in October 1904 to sail to Port Arthur through the North Sea and around Africa. However, on the course of the long journey, the crew were continually demoralized by the continued defeats by their fellow countrymen in the Russo-Japanese war. The revolutions unrest in their country also facilitated in the demoralization of the crew. This led to rebellion and divisions amongst the Russians as they sailed to Port Arthur. On arrival to Japan, the crewmen and the army were tired and were unable to stop the Japanese in taking over the Port Arthur. In an attempt to counter attack Russians
moved to Vladivostok through the Tsushima. In Tsushima is where the last battle of the war took place and the war ended in Japan’s favor.

Both countries suffered huge numbers of casualties in the period of war. These includes the soldiers that died as a result of diseases during the war. China civilians also suffered deaths as a result of collateral damage of the war. Additionally, Japan was exhausted financially due to their spending on the military activities during the war and was unwilling to continue the war. Lastly, Russia was defeated in the Tsushima battle and concurrently political unrest was getting intense throughout Russia. All these factors forced both countries to the negotiating table in search for peace.

The peace negotiations were spearheaded by Theodore Roosevelt who was the President of the United States. The talks were held in Portsmouth on August to September 1905. The negotiations conclude by the signing of the Peace Treaty of Portsmouth in which Japan acquired back the control of Peninsula and Port Arthur. Japan also gained control of South Manchuria Railroad and Korea. Russia in return was to evacuate from South Manchuria which was restored to China.

The Russo-Japanese War has a great significance in the history as it saw a European power lose to a non-European Power. The Russians lost prestige as a powerful country and also suffered political unrest. However, although the Japans seemed to be the main gainers of the Treaty of Portsmouth they did not get the monetary compensation the Japanese people expected.
Bibliography

